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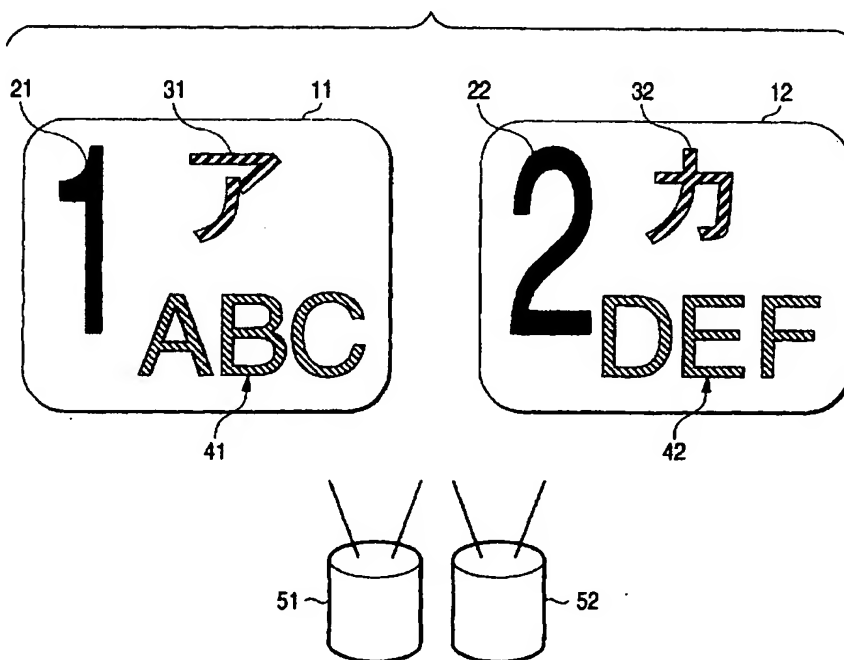
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(54) **Button for an electric device and method of controlling lighting of the button**

(57) In a button for an electronic device, a red numeral pattern 21, a green kana pattern 31 and a black English character pattern 41 are printed on a key top 11 as plural kinds of patterns. By selectively causing a red

LED 51 and a green LED 52 that function as a light source of a backlight to emit a light, red, green and orange lighting colors of the backlight are obtained. According to the color of the pattern used according to a mode, the lighting color of the backlight is switched.

FIG. 1



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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a button for an electronic device such as a portable telephone, a remote controller, a portable information terminal, or the like, and particularly to a button having a lighting means for lightening the button and a method of controlling the button lighting.

[0002] In an electronic device, and particularly in a portable telephone, a remote controller and the like that are typical of a small-sized portable information terminal, miniaturization and multi-functionalization progress, so that a method that assigns a plurality of parts to one button is used. On the other hand, there is also provided the structure in which a button portion is lightened so that the button can be operated even in a dark spot.

[0003] Since the plural parts are assigned to one button, the different kinds of patterns according to their parts are provided in one button. Such the button requires consideration of preventing operational efficiency of the button from decreasing.

[0004] An object of the invention is to provide a button for an electric device and a method of controlling the lighting of the button which eliminate the above-mentioned problems.

[0005] In order to solve the above problem, a button of an electronic device according to the invention is characterized in that in the button of the electronic device including a button in which the plural patterns are displayed in one key top and a lighting means for lightening the button, the plural patterns are colored with a plurality of different colors, and that the lighting means includes a plurality of different luminous colors of which the number is the same as that of the plural patterns.

[0006] Further, in order to solve the above method, a lighting controlling method of a button in an electronic device according to the invention is characterized in that in the method for controlling lighting of button in the electronic device including a button in which plural patterns colored with a plurality of different colors are displayed in one key top, and a lighting means for lightening the button with a plurality of different luminous colors of which the number is the same as that of the plural patterns, lighting of the lighting means is controlled so that the luminous color is different from the color of the pattern utilized in the set mode.

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing the structure of a button provided for a portable telephone according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the relation among a pattern color of the button of the portable telephone according to the embodiment of the invention, a lighting color of a backlight, and a mode; and

Fig. 3 is a flowchart showing a lighting controlling method of the portable telephone according to the embodiment of the invention.

[0007] An embodiment of the invention will be described below in detail with reference to Figs. 1 to 3.

[0008] Fig. 1 shows the structure of a button provided for a portable telephone according to this embodiment; Fig. 2 shows the relation among a pattern color of the button, a backlight lighting color, and a mode; and Fig. 3 is a flowchart showing a method for controlling lighting of the button.

[0009] In Fig. 1, each of key tops 11, 12 of plural buttons provided for a portable telephone is made of transparent or semitransparent resin material, which can transmit a light emitted from a red LED 51 and a green LED 52 which function as a lighting means. A box body in which the buttons are placed is formed of material that cannot transmit the lights, whereby when the lighting means of the button emits the light, only the buttons can be lightened.

[0010] In these key tops 11, 12, numeral patterns 21, 22, Japanese character (kana) patterns 31, 32, and English character patterns 41, 42 are displayed. The structure in which the plural patterns are thus displayed in one key top can be achieved by printing the patterns on the inside surface of the key top. Such the technology has been disclosed in, for example, JP-A-9-82174.

[0011] Further, when these patterns are printed, the numeral patterns 21, 22 are printed with a black paint, the kana patterns 31, 32 are printed with a green paint, and the English character patterns 41, 42 are printed with a red paint.

[0012] As a light source of the lighting means for lightening these plural buttons from their backsides (the inside of the box body), there are provided the red LED 51 and the green LED 52. By causing these LED of two colors to emit the light selectively or simultaneously, backlights of three lighting colors; red, green and orange can be obtained.

[0013] Next, referring to Fig. 2, the relation among a pattern color of the button, a backlight lighting color, and a mode will be described. When characters for mail writing are input in the portable telephone, kana input, English character input and numeral input can be selected according to the input character and a character converting method. Setting of the mode means setting of each of the kana input, English character input and numeral input.

[0014] In the portable telephone of this embodiment, when the kana input, the English character input or the numeral input is selected, the lighting color of the backlight is switched according to the selected input mode. Specifically, when the kana input is selected, the red LED 51 is caused to emit the light and the lighting color of the backlight becomes red; when the English character input is selected, the green LED 52 is caused to emit the light and the lighting color of the backlight becomes green; and when the numeral input is selected, both the red LED 51 and the green LED 52 are caused to emit the light and the lighting color of the backlight becomes orange.

[0015] Further, regarding the printing color of the button, as described before, the numeral patterns 21, 22 are printed with black, the kana patterns 31, 32 are printed with green, and the English character patterns 41, 42 are printed with red. Accordingly, by the relation between the printing color and the lighting color of the backlight, the following working can be obtained.

[0016] When the kana input is selected, the lighting color of the backlight is red. Therefore, the English character patterns 41, 42 printed with red are hard to see. To the contrary, the kana patterns 31, 32 printed with green are conspicuous since green and red are complementary.

[0017] Similarly to this, when the English character input is selected, the lighting color of the backlight is green. Therefore, the kana patterns 31, 32 printed with green are hard to see. To the contrary, the English character patterns 41, 42 printed with red are conspicuous since red and green are complementary.

[0018] Further, when the numeral input is selected, the lighting color of the backlight is orange. Therefore, the kana patterns 31, 32 printed with green and the English character patterns 41, 42 printed with red are hard to see. To the contrary, the numeral patterns 21, 22 printed with black are conspicuous since black and orange are complementary.

[0019] Next, referring to the flowchart shown in Fig. 3, alighting controlling method of this button will be described. Firstly, whether a mail button for proceeding to a mail-creating mode is pushed by a user or not is judged (step S1). Here, in case that it is judged that the mail button is not pushed (In case of no), the procedure returns again to the step S1 and it is in waiting state in this step till the mail button is pushed.

[0020] If it is judged that the mail button is pushed (In case of yes), the portable telephone enters the mail creating mode and the kana input is set as an initial input state (step 2). Next, the red LED 51 is caused to emit the light so that the lighting color of the backlight becomes red.

[0021] In this state, in the key tops 11, 12 that are lighting up in red, the green kana patterns 31, 32 are displayed, so that the user can create mail sentences in a state where the kana patterns 31, 32 are easy to see since green and red are complementary. Next, whether an input switching button for changing an input method is pushed by the user or not is judged (step S4). In case that the user is continually using the kana input (In case of no), the procedure proceeds to a step S9 and whether a mail input ending operation has been performed or not is judged. The end of the mail input is performed by judging whether a mail memory button operated at the mail creation completing time or a release button (for example, a power button) for releasing the mail creating mode is operated or not.

[0022] If it is judged in this step (S9) that the mail input has completed (In case of yes), this control is completed. On the other hand, in the case that it is judged that

the mail input has not been completed yet (in case of no), the procedure returns to the step S4 and the mail creating operation is continued. In case that it is judged that the user pushes the input switching button during this mail creating operation (step S4: yes), whether an input mode set by the operation of its input switching button is the kana input mode or not is judged (step S5). In the case that the user operates the input switching button and resultantly the input mode is kept the kana input mode (In case of yes), the lighting color of the backlight is not changed to be kept red, and the procedure proceeds to the step 9.

[0023] In the case that the user operates the input switching button and resultantly sets another input mode than the kana input mode (In case of no), whether the English character input mode is set or not is judged (step S6). Here, in case that it is judged that the English character input mode is set (in case of yes), the green LED 52 is caused to emit the light so that the lighting color of the backlight becomes green (step S7). In this state, in the key tops 11, 12 that are lighting up in green, the red English character patterns 41, 42 are displayed, so that the user can execute the mail creating operation in a state where the English character patterns 41, 42 is easy to see since its color and green are complementary.

[0024] If it is judged that the English character input is not set (In case of yes), i.e., if it is judged that neither the kana input mode nor the English character input mode but the numeral input mode is set, both the red LED 51 and the green LED 52 are caused to emit the light so that the lighting color of the backlight becomes orange (step 8). In this state, in the key tops 11, 12 that are lighting up in orange, the black numeral patterns 21, 22 are displayed, so that the user can execute the mail creating operation in a state where the numeral patterns 21, 22 are easy to see since its color and orange are complementary. Then, after the lighting color of the backlight is changed in the step 7 or 8, the procedure proceeds to the step 9.

[0025] As described above, every time the user operates the input switching button to set the input method during the mail creating operation, the lighting color of the backlight is changed and the color of the pattern used in the set input method becomes the complementary color in relation to the lighting color of the backlight, so that the patterns can be conspicuous in the key tops 11, 12 and the operational efficiency of the button by the user improves extremely.

[0026] In the above embodiment, the mail creating operation is taken as one example of the invention, and switching of the lighting color of the backlight is controlled according to the mode (any one of the kana input mode, the English character input mode, and the numeral input mode) set by the user, correspondingly to the printed color of the pattern used in its set mode. Therefore, such an effect can be obtained that the patterns utilized in the set mode are conspicuous in the key

top 11, 12.

[0027] In the above embodiment, the switching control of the lighting color of the backlight corresponding to the mode set during the mail creating operation is described, however the invention is not limited to this. For example, in case that the user has pushed a speaking button to set a speaking mode, both the red LED 51 and the green LED 52 are caused to emit the light so that the lighting color of the backlight becomes orange, and the black numeral patterns 21, 22 are displayed in the key tops 11, 12 that light up in orange.

[0028] Further, as another embodiment, in an address register function in which a name and a telephone number are registered in pairs, in a name input mode, the red LED 51 is caused to emit the light so that the lighting color of the backlight becomes red, and the green kana patterns 31, 32 are displayed in the key tops 11, 12 that light up in red; and in a telephone number input mode, both the red LED 51 and the green LED 52 are caused to emit the light so that the lighting color of the backlight becomes orange, and the black numeral patterns 21, 22 are displayed in the key tops 11, 12 that light up in orange.

[0029] As described above, in the embodiments of the invention, switching of the lighting color of the backlight is controlled according to the mode set by the user, correspondingly to the printed color of the pattern used in its set mode. In these embodiments, though the invention is applied to the portable telephone, it is not limited to this and can be applied to all the electronic devices such as a remote controller that is representative of a portable information terminal, and the like.

[0030] In the above embodiments, the relation between the color of the patterns displayed in the key tops 11, 12 and the lighting color of the backlight is set so that they become complementary and the color of the pattern is conspicuous, that is, set so that in relation to the green kana patterns 31, 32, the lighting color of the backlight becomes red; in relation to the red English character patterns 41, 42, the lighting color of the backlight becomes green; and in relation to the black numeral patterns 21, 22, the lighting color of the backlight becomes orange. The invention is not limited to these color arrangements, and it is desirable that the relation between the color of the patterns displayed in the key tops 11, 12 and the lighting color of the backlight is formed so that they become complementary and the color of the pattern is conspicuous.

[0031] As described above, in the invention, switching of the lighting color of the backlight is controlled according to the mode set by the user, correspondingly to the printed color of the pattern used in its set mode. Therefore, such an effect can be obtained that the pattern utilized in the set mode is conspicuous in the key top.

[0032] Hereby, even in the button in which plural different kinds of patterns are displayed, the pattern necessary for the input at each occasion can be conspicuous. Therefore, the operational efficiency of the button

by the user extremely improves.

Claims

1. A button for an electronic device, comprising:

a button where plural patterns are displayed on one key top; and
a unit for lightening said button;
wherein said plural patterns are colored with plural different colors, and said lighting unit includes a plurality of different lighting colors including the same colors as those of said plural patterns.

2. The button according to claim 1, further comprising a backlight color switch for switching a backlight color according to the lighting color of said button.

3. The button according to claim 2, wherein said backlight color switch switches the backlight color so that the lighting color of said button is complementary to the backlight color.

4. A method of controlling lighting of a button in an electronic device, comprising the steps of:

preparing a button in which plural patterns colored with plural different colors are displayed on one key top;
lightening said button with plural different lighting colors including the same colors as those of said plural patterns so that the lighting color is different from the color of the pattern utilized in a set mode.

5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising the step of switching a backlight color according to the lighting color of said button.

6. The button according to claim 5, wherein said backlight color switch switches the backlight color so that the backlight color is complementary to the lighting color of said button.

FIG. 1

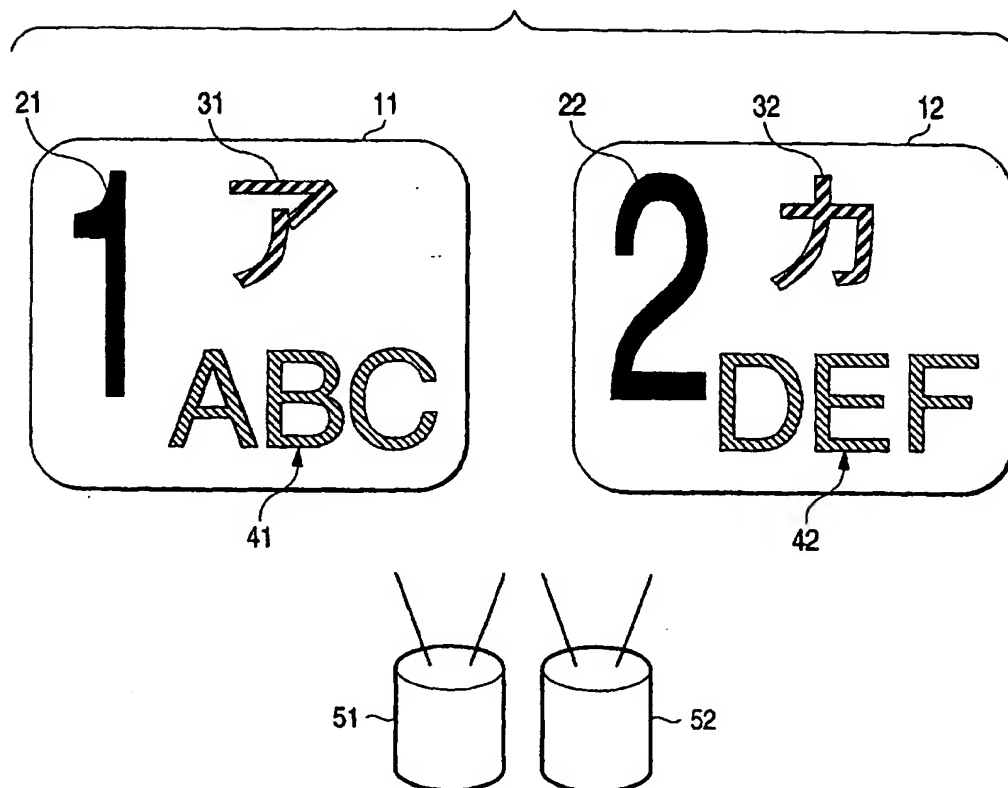
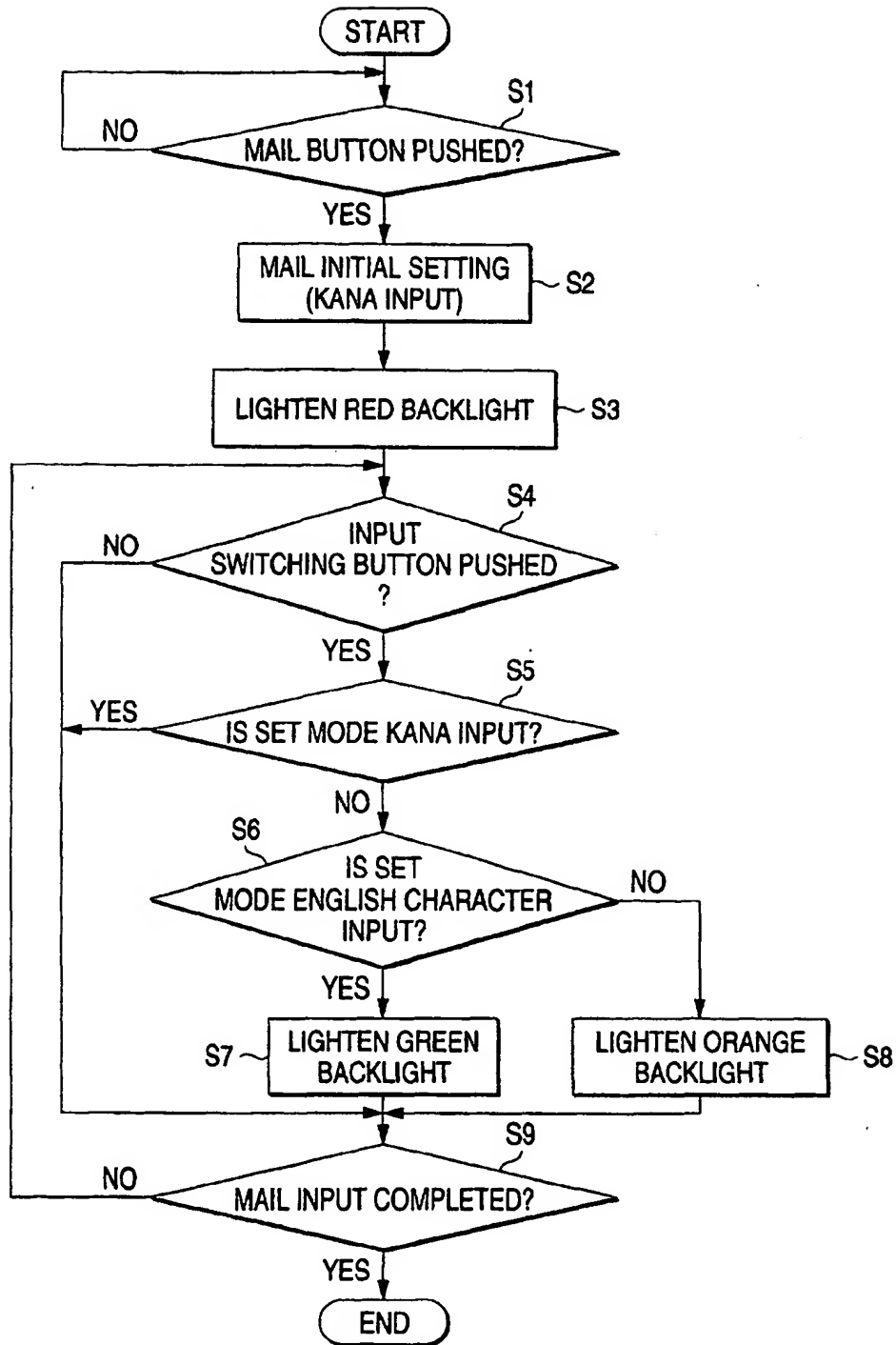


FIG. 2

PATTERN KIND	PRINTED COLOR	BACKLIGHT LIGHTING COLOR		
		RED	GREEN	ORANGE
KANA PATTERN	GREEN	KANA INPUT	-	-
ENGLISH CHARACTER PATTERN	RED	-	ENGLISH CHARACTER INPUT	-
NUMERAL PATTERN	BLACK	-	-	NUMERAL INPUT

FIG. 3





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 01 30 2045

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Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 29 October 2002	Examiner Delangue, P
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document		T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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